**The Great Divergence: The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration and the Systematic Deconstruction of Scofieldian Dispensationalism in Global Ecumenical Theology**

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For over a century, the Scofield Reference Bible served as the primary architectural blueprint for American Evangelicalism's approach to the Middle East, embedding a specific brand of dispensationalist eschatology into the heart of Western geopolitics. However, the mid-2020s have marked a definitive and institutional collapse of this theological hegemony. This paper examines the "Great Divergence"—a period of formal, structural rejection of Scofield's "two-peoples" theory by the world's oldest and largest Christian bodies. Starting with the Episcopal Church's landmark Resolution D006 in 2024 and culminating in the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, this study explores how the global church has moved from mere disagreement to labeling Christian Zionism as a heterodox ideology. By analyzing official doctrinal statements from the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, and Middle Eastern churches, we trace the reclamation of Covenant Theology over Scofieldian discontinuity. The implications of this shift are profound, signaling not just a theological debate, but a fundamental divorce between historic Christian ecclesiology and modern nationalist geopolitics. This movement seeks to protect the "living stones" of the Holy Land by dismantling the biblical interpretations that have, for decades, sacralized territorial conflict and marginalized the presence of the indigenous Christian flock in the Levant.

Keywords; Christian Zionism, C.I. Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible, 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, Episcopal Church Resolution D006, Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology, Ecumenical Theology, Middle East Council of Churches, Christian Nationalism, Palestinian Christians, Geopolitics and Religion, Eschatology, Church History

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## 1. The Twilight of the Scofield Era: An Introduction

The landscape of global Christianity in 2026 is defined by a profound and systemic realignment. For more than a century, the Scofield Reference Bible served as the silent architect of Western Protestantism's geopolitical imagination. First published in 1909 and revised in 1917, C.I. Scofield's annotated scripture did more than provide a study guide; it installed a complex theological operating system known as dispensationalism into the pews of millions. This system, characterized by a radical separation between the destiny of the physical nation of Israel and the spiritual role of the Christian Church, became the primary lens through which generations of believers interpreted the events of the twentieth century. From the Balfour Declaration to the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel and the subsequent regional conflicts of the twenty-first century, Scofield's footnotes provided a teleological certainty that these events were not merely political, but the direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy. However, as we move through the middle of the current decade, the "Scofield Era" is entering a decisive twilight.

### The Collapse of an Interpretive Monopoly

The dominance of Scofieldian thought was never absolute, but it was pervasive enough to dictate the terms of engagement for Christian involvement in the Middle East. It created a culture where the "Secret Rapture," the "Parenthesis Church," and the "Age of Law" were accepted as standard biblical truths in many Evangelical circles. Yet, the historic and liturgical traditions—the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Reformed churches—always maintained a cautious or outright hostile distance from this nineteenth-century novelty. What has changed in the last two years is the transition from quiet theological disagreement to formal, institutional, and ecumenical condemnation. This shift is not merely academic; it is a defensive reaction by the global church to protect the integrity of the Gospel and the safety of the indigenous Christian communities in the Levant. The year 2026 stands as a marker where the "Great Divergence" reached its zenith, as the oldest branches of the faith collectively moved to excise Scofield's framework from the body of acceptable Christian doctrine.

### The Impetus of the 2020s

Several factors have converged to trigger this systematic deconstruction. First, the escalating regional instability in the Middle East during the early 2020s brought the real-world consequences of dispensationalist theology into sharp relief. When theological abstractions regarding "Armageddon" begin to inform nuclear-age foreign policy, the stakes move beyond the seminary. Second, the rise of Christian Zionism as a potent political force in the West prompted a counter-reaction from the "Mother Churches" of the East. These churches, representing the continuous presence of Christianity in the Holy Land since the first century, began to voice an increasingly desperate plea: that Western theology was being used to justify

their own displacement and marginalization. They argued that Scofield's "two-peoples" theory had effectively rendered the local, living Christian community invisible, replacing them with a prophetic timeline that prioritized land over people and military victory over the Prince of Peace.

**Resolution D006 and the Jerusalem Declaration**

The legislative turning point arrived in 2024 with the Episcopal Church's Resolution D006, which formally rejected the politics and theology of Christian Zionism. This was followed by the seismic 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, a joint statement issued by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. In this document, the highest authorities of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican traditions in the Holy Land labeled the Scofieldian framework a "false teaching" and a "damaging ideology." This paper will explore how these declarations represent the final fracturing of a century-long consensus and the beginning of a new era of ecumenical unity centered on Covenant Theology. As we analyze the sections that follow, we will trace the journey of Scofieldism from its origins as a niche American theory to its current status as a catalyst for what many are calling the most significant doctrinal realignment since the Reformation. The twilight of the Scofield era is not just the end of an interpretive fad; it is a reclamation of the historic Christian claim that all the promises of God find their "Yes" and "Amen" in Jesus Christ, rather than in any geopolitical entity or territorial claim.

## 2. Historical Genesis: C.I. Scofield and the Rise of the Two-Peoples Theory

**The Architect of Discontinuity**

Cyrus Ingerson Scofield was not a trained theologian in the classical sense, but rather a lawyer and politician whose life took a dramatic turn following a conversion experience in the late nineteenth century. This background in law arguably influenced his approach to scripture, which he treated as a series of divine dispensations or legal administrations. While Scofield is often credited with the creation of the system that bears his name, he was primarily a popularizer and synthesizer of the ideas of John Nelson Darby, an Anglo-Irish leader of the Plymouth Brethren. Darby had developed a rigorous framework of rightly dividing the word of truth, which insisted that the Bible could only be understood if one recognized distinct eras in which God dealt with humanity under different sets of rules. Scofield took these complex, often dense Darbyite ideas and distilled them into a format that was revolutionary for its time: the annotated study Bible.

**The Mechanics of the Scofield Reference Bible**

When the Scofield Reference Bible was first published by Oxford University Press in 1909, it introduced a layout that changed the way millions of Christians engaged with the text. By

placing his interpretive notes directly on the same page as the biblical verses, Scofield effectively blurred the line between the inspired word of God and his own theological commentary. For the lay reader, the distinction between the Book of Genesis and Scofield's notes on Genesis became increasingly difficult to maintain. His system divided human history into seven distinct dispensations, but the most consequential aspect of his work was the two-peoples theory. Scofield argued that God possesses two distinct groups of people: an earthly people, Israel, to whom belong earthly promises and a land, and a heavenly people, the Church, to whom belong spiritual promises and a celestial future.

**The Parenthesis and the Jewish Restoration**

In the Scofieldian framework, the Church is viewed as a parenthesis in God's primary dealings with Israel. According to this view, because Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah, God paused the prophetic clock and inaugurated the Age of Grace or the Church Age. Scofield taught that this period was a temporary interruption and that God would eventually remove the Church via a Secret Rapture to resume His literal, territorial promises to the Jewish people. This theological innovation had profound implications. It meant that the Old Testament prophecies regarding the land of Canaan were not spiritualized or fulfilled in the Church, as historic Christianity had maintained for nearly two millennia. Instead, they remained literally applicable to the ethnic and national descendants of Abraham. This provided a ready-made theological justification for the burgeoning Zionist movement of the early twentieth century, linking American fundamentalist piety to the geopolitical restoration of a Jewish state.

**Institutionalization and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Crisis**

The timing of Scofield's work was critical. It arrived just as American Protestantism was fracturing during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. For those seeking to defend the fundamentals of the faith against liberal theology and Darwinism, Scofield's Bible provided a comprehensive, seemingly scientific, and internally consistent system for understanding the whole of scripture. It offered a sense of certainty in a rapidly changing world. By the time of Scofield's death in 1921, his Reference Bible had become the unofficial textbook of the fundamentalist movement and the primary curriculum for the newly established Bible institutes across North America. This institutionalization ensured that his two-peoples theory would not remain a niche opinion but would instead become the dominant eschatological framework for millions of believers, setting the stage for the massive political and theological conflicts that would emerge a century later.

## 3. The Theological Divide: Covenantal Continuity vs. Dispensational Discontinuity

### The Architecture of Sacred History

At the heart of the "Great Divergence" lies a fundamental disagreement over the very structure of the biblical narrative. To understand why the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration and the Episcopal Church's Resolution D006 are so significant, one must grasp the architectural difference between Covenant Theology and Scofieldian Dispensationalism. These are not merely two different ways of reading the End Times; they are two entirely different maps of how God relates to humanity across time. While Covenant Theology views the Bible as a single, unfolding story of one people, Dispensationalism sees a series of distinct administrations where God deals with different groups under different rules.

### The Logic of Continuity: Covenant Theology

The historic position of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Reformed traditions is rooted in Covenant Theology. This framework emphasizes the organic unity of the Old and New Testaments. In this view, the various covenants made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David are not separate "plans," but progressive stages of a single "Covenant of Grace." The Church is not a new or separate entity but the continuation and fulfillment of Israel.

- **The Single People of God:** There is only one olive tree, as described by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, into which Gentiles are grafted.
- **The Fulfillment in Christ:** All the promises made to Abraham regarding land, seed, and blessing find their ultimate "Yes" in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the "Land" is no longer a specific piece of real estate in the Levant but has been expanded to include the whole world through the Kingdom of God.
- **The Church as the New Israel:** The titles and privileges once reserved for ethnic Israel are, in the New Covenant, applied to the multi-ethnic body of Christ.

### The Logic of Discontinuity: Scofieldian Dispensationalism

In sharp contrast, C.I. Scofield's system is built on the principle of radical discontinuity. For Scofield, the "rightly dividing" of the word of truth required maintaining a hard wall between God's program for "Earthly Israel" and "The Heavenly Church." This creates a theological "Two-Peoples" theory that dictates how every verse of the Bible is categorized.

- **The Parenthesis Church:** Because Israel rejected the "Kingdom" offered by Jesus, Scofield argued that the prophetic clock stopped. The Church is viewed as an "intercalation" or a gap in the real story, which is the restoration of the Davidic Monarchy on earth.

- **The Postponement Theory:** The teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, are often categorized as "Kingdom Laws" intended for a future Jewish age, rather than as mandates for the present-day Church.
- **Literalism vs. Typology:** Dispensationalists insist on a "consistent literalism" for Old Testament land promises. If God promised a specific border to Abraham, Scofield argued that this promise must be fulfilled physically and ethnically, regardless of the coming of Christ or the establishment of the Church.

**The Comparative Hermeneutic**

The following table illustrates how these two systems diverge on key theological pillars, illustrating why the institutional rejection in 2026 became inevitable.

| Feature | Covenant Theology (Historic Christianity) | Scofieldian Dispensationalism |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary Theme** | Unity and Fulfillment | Distinction and Division |
| **Role of the Law** | A guide for the believer, fulfilled in Christ | A separate "Age of Law" distinct from Grace |
| **The "Land" Promise** | Transfigured into the Global Kingdom | Literally tied to Middle Eastern geography |
| **Israel and Church** | One continuous People of God | Two separate peoples with two separate destinies |
| **The New Testament** | The final interpretive key for the Old | A "parenthesis" until the Old Testament resumes |

### The Crisis of Interpretation

The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration specifically targeted the "hermeneutic of division" found in Scofield's notes. The Patriarchs argued that by separating the "Earthly Israel" from the "Heavenly Church," Scofieldism effectively de-Christianizes the Old Testament and de-Judaizes the New. This theological wall makes it impossible to view the indigenous Christians of the Holy Land as the rightful heirs of the biblical narrative. In the Scofieldian view, a Palestinian Christian is a "Gentile member of the Church," while the land promises belong exclusively to an ethnic group that may or may not recognize Christ. This creates a theological paradox where the "living stones" of the local church are marginalized by a system that prioritizes a future, ethnic restoration over the present, spiritual reality of the Body of Christ. By reclaiming Covenantal Continuity, the historic churches are attempting to heal this 100-year-old fracture in the Christian imagination.

## 4. The Episcopal Pivot: Analyzing Resolution D006 and the 2024 General Convention

### The 81st General Convention as a Watershed Moment

The summer of 2024 marked a decisive shift in the internal life and external witness of the Episcopal Church. Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, the 81st General Convention was initially expected to be another theater for familiar political debates regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the introduction and eventual passage of Resolution D006 signaled that the church was moving beyond mere policy critiques toward a fundamental theological reappraisal. For decades, the Episcopal Church had navigated the complexities of Middle Eastern diplomacy through a series of balanced resolutions. With D006, the convention shifted its focus to the underlying theological engine that drives much of Western policy in the region: Christian Zionism. This pivot represented an institutional recognition that the crisis in the Holy Land could not be addressed solely through political advocacy; it required a direct confrontation with the Scofieldian framework that has historically provided a religious cloak for territorial expansion and the marginalization of indigenous communities.

### Resolution D006: Rejecting a Politicized Theology

Resolution D006, titled "Rejecting the Theology and Politics of Christian Zionism," was a landmark piece of legislation. It formally defined Christian Zionism as a politicized Christian theology—distinct from Jewish Zionism—that promotes an eschatology where the Second Coming of Christ is made contingent upon the existence of a modern ethno-national state. The resolution specifically targeted the "rigid interpretation" of scripture characteristic of the Scofieldian tradition, citing it as a corruption of the Gospel message of justice and love. By passing this resolution, the Episcopal Church officially categorized the belief system that views

the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel as a divinely mandated "dispensation" as a departure from historic Christian teaching. The convention argued that such a worldview, which prioritizes a future apocalyptic war over a present just peace, is fundamentally incompatible with the Baptismal Covenant's call to strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being.

**The Intervention of the Archbishop in Jerusalem**

The passage of D006 was not without its internal drama, reflecting the deep-seated influence of dispensationalist thought even within more liturgical traditions. Initially, the House of Bishops rejected the resolution, a move that sparked immediate distress among many deputies and observers. The turning point came through a direct appeal from the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Dr. Hosam Naoum. The Archbishop expressed profound disappointment at the initial rejection, reminding the American bishops that for Palestinian Christians, these theological debates are not abstract—they are existential. He argued that the theology of Christian Zionism renders the local Christian flock invisible and justifies their displacement. Following this intervention, the bishops moved to reconsider the resolution, eventually passing it as substituted and amended. This exchange highlighted a new reality in the Anglican Communion: the "Mother Church" in Jerusalem was no longer a silent recipient of Western aid, but a theological arbiter demanding that the Western church dismantle the ideologies that harm the local Body of Christ.

**The Theological and Institutional Consequences**

The adoption of Resolution D006 had immediate ripple effects across the church's institutional life. It empowered the Office of Government Relations to move beyond standard calls for a "two-state solution" and begin challenging the financial and political structures supported by Christian Zionist organizations. More importantly, it spurred a liturgical and educational movement within the church. Accompanying resolutions, such as A110, called for a clear distinction in prayer book liturgies and hymnody between "Biblical Israel" and the "Modern State of Israel." This was intended to correct the "conflation" that often leads parishioners to believe that modern political events are a direct continuation of the biblical story of the patriarchs. By stripping away the sacralized status of modern geopolitics, the Episcopal Church reclaimed a space for a theology of the Cross over a theology of Glory, setting the stage for the even broader ecumenical consensus that would emerge in the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration.

## 5. The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration: A Cry from the Mother Church

### A Unified Voice in a Fragmented Land

On January 17, 2026, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem issued what has become known as the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration. This joint statement was a rare and potent display of ecumenical unity, signed by the leaders of the Latin Rite (Roman Catholic), Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Anglican churches, among others. While these bodies have historically navigated internal theological differences, the 2026 declaration represented a strategic and pastoral "firebreak" against the encroachment of foreign eschatological frameworks. The document was not merely a political commentary but a profound assertion of apostolic authority. By speaking as a single body, the "Mother Church" of Jerusalem sought to reclaim the narrative of the Holy Land from Western interpretive models that had, for over a century, treated the region as a stage for an end-times play rather than a home for a living, indigenous Christian community.

### The Charge of "Damaging Ideologies"

The declaration was notably blunt in its terminology, specifically labeling Christian Zionism as one of several "damaging ideologies" that "mislead the public, sow confusion, and harm the unity of our flock." This phrasing marked a significant escalation from the 2006 Jerusalem Declaration issued twenty years prior. In 2026, the church leaders argued that these ideologies—deeply rooted in the Scofieldian tradition—had moved beyond the realm of academic debate and were now actively destabilizing the social and religious fabric of the region. They criticized the "sacralization" of modern political agendas and the "interference" of foreign religious actors who claimed to speak for the Holy Land while ignoring the voices of the local bishops. The declaration asserted that the Scofieldian framework, by emphasizing a literalist and ethnic fulfillment of prophecy, effectively "de-baptizes" the local Palestinian Christian, rendering them a theological irrelevance in their own homeland.

### The Representation of the "Living Stones"

A central pillar of the 2026 statement was the concept of the "Living Stones"—the continuous Christian presence in the Holy Land dating back to the Day of Pentecost. The Patriarchs argued that they alone possess the pastoral mandate and apostolic succession to represent the Christian community in matters of religious and communal life. This was a direct rebuke to the "Scofieldian intermediaries" who have often acted as self-appointed representatives of the "Christian interest" in the Middle East. The declaration used the imagery of the "One Body of Christ" (Romans 12:5) to dismantle the Scofieldian "Two-Peoples" theory. By insisting on the unity of the flock, the Jerusalem leaders rejected the notion that God has a separate, physical plan for a national entity that bypasses the spiritual and corporate reality of the Church. This

"pastoral cry" was a demand for the global church to stop viewing the Holy Land through the lens of a 1909 study Bible and start seeing it through the eyes of the people who have guarded the Holy Sites for two millennia.

**Geopolitical Context and the Call for Peace**

The timing of the declaration in January 2026 was critical, coinciding with a period of intense regional tension and the visible influence of dispensationalist groups in international diplomacy. The church leaders expressed alarm that specific "political actors" were using Christian Zionist rhetoric to justify the displacement of communities and the erasure of the Christian heritage in Jerusalem. In the face of such pressures, the declaration called for a return to a "theology of reconciliation" rather than a "theology of division." It argued that any interpretation of scripture that results in the exclusion or marginalization of "the other" is a corruption of the Gospel. By framing Christian Zionism as a "false teaching" that prioritize territorial expansion over the "New Commandment" of love, the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration effectively excommunicated Scofieldian dispensationalism from the heart of the Christian faith in the very land where that faith began.

**6. The Catholic Response: Reclaiming the Gospels from the "Age of Law"**

**A History of Doctrinal Condemnation**

The Roman Catholic Church's rejection of the Scofieldian framework is rooted in a centuries-old opposition to millenarianism—the belief in a literal, physical thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. While many Protestant denominations have only recently codified their opposition to dispensationalism, the Holy See has long viewed it as a theological novelty that contradicts the historic creeds. The Catholic critique, intensified by the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, focuses on the way Scofield's system compartmentalizes the Bible into mutually exclusive eras. For the Catholic Church, the Bible is a seamless garment of revelation, and any attempt to "divide" it into sections where God operates under different principles of salvation is seen as a departure from the apostolic faith. The Church has consistently labeled the idea of a "Secret Rapture" and the "postponement of the Kingdom" as speculative errors that distort the central mystery of the Incarnation.

**The Heresy of the "Age of Law"**

One of the most significant Catholic objections to Scofield's notes concerns his treatment of the Gospels. In the Scofield Reference Bible, the teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, are frequently assigned to an "Age of Law" or a "Jewish Kingdom Age." Scofield argued that these commands were intended for a future Davidic kingdom and were not directly

applicable to the Church during this current "Age of Grace." From a Catholic perspective, this is a profound Christological error. It effectively moves the words of Christ out of the reach of the Christian faithful, suggesting that the primary teachings of the Savior were a "legalistic" requirement for a different people in a different time. In the 2020s, Catholic theologians have pushed back aggressively against this, arguing that such a framework marginalizes the person of Jesus and turns the Gospel into a temporary "parenthesis" rather than the definitive revelation of God's will for all humanity.

**Christocentric Fulfillment vs. Scofield's Novelty**

The Catholic response emphasizes that the Church is the "New Israel"—not in the sense of replacing the Jewish people in God's love, but in the sense of the "fulfillment" of the promises made to Abraham. The Church teaches that the Old Covenant is not "paused" or "postponed," but has reached its telos, or goal, in the Person of Christ. Therefore, the physical land of Israel and the earthly city of Jerusalem are understood as "types" that point toward the "Anti-type": the Kingdom of God and the Heavenly Jerusalem. By insisting on a literal, physical restoration of a national entity as a prerequisite for the Second Coming, Scofieldism is viewed by Catholic authorities as a regression to an "earthly" understanding of the Kingdom that Jesus himself rejected. This "re-judaizing" of the Christian hope, as Catholic critics call it, is seen as a failure to recognize the universal and spiritual nature of the New Covenant.

**The 2026 Papal Clarification**

In tandem with the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, the Vatican issued a clarification through the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, reinforcing the position that "Christian Zionism" is a theological error. The statement clarified that while the Church maintains a deep and irrevocable respect for the Jewish people and their heritage, it cannot endorse a theology that uses the Bible to justify modern territorial disputes or the displacement of Christian and Muslim populations. This clarification was particularly impactful because it linked the theological critique of Scofieldism with the Catholic Social Teaching principles of justice and the common good. By reclaiming the Gospels from Scofield's "Age of Law," the Church re-established the Sermon on the Mount as the definitive ethical guide for the present moment, rejecting any eschatology that justifies conflict as a "divine necessity." This move further isolated the Scofieldian tradition, signaling that the largest Christian body in the world views dispensationalism not as a sibling tradition, but as a "19th-century novelty" that has no place in the heart of the Church's life.

## 7. Reformed and Lutheran Critiques: The Error of the "Parenthesis Church"

### The Reformed Rejection of Dual Paths of Salvation

The Reformed tradition, encompassing Presbyterian and Continental Reformed churches, has long stood as a primary intellectual antagonist to the Scofieldian system. The core of the Reformed critique rests on the "Covenant of Grace," which posits that God has only ever had one way of saving humanity: through faith in the promised Messiah. In the mid-twentieth century, as seen in the 1971 report by the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Reformed theologians began formally documenting the "serious errors" within Scofield's notes. The primary charge was that Scofield introduced a "dual path" to salvation. By suggesting that Old Testament Israel was saved by "works" or "legal obedience" while the Church is saved by "grace," Scofield was seen as undermining the very foundations of the Reformation's *Sola Gratia*. In the 2026 theological climate, this critique has been updated to address the modern implications of this division, arguing that Scofield's "Age of Law" effectively creates a version of Christianity that operates without the necessity of the Cross for half of human history.

### The "Parenthesis Church" as an Ecclesiological Error

One of the most controversial elements of Scofield's eschatology is the "Parenthesis" or "Intercalation" theory of the Church. Scofield taught that the Church was a "mystery" unrevealed in the Old Testament, a temporary measure introduced only after Israel rejected the earthly kingdom. To the Reformed mind, this suggests that the Church is an "afterthought" or a "plan B" in God's sovereignty. Reformed ecclesiology, by contrast, views the Church as the very center of God's eternal purpose—the "Assembly of the Saints" that spans both testaments. The 2025 Reformed-Anglican Joint Statement, which preceded the Jerusalem Declaration, argued that the "Parenthesis" theory is not merely an eschatological quirk but a "catastrophic ecclesiological error." By labeling the Church a temporary gap in God's "real" dealings with national Israel, Scofieldism strips the Church of its identity as the "New Israel" and the "Body of Christ," reducing it to a celestial waiting room for a Gentile audience.

### Lutheranism and the Rejection of Chiliasm

The Lutheran tradition brings a distinct, centuries-old weapon to the critique of Scofieldism: the rejection of "Chiliasm" (the belief in a literal, earthly thousand-year reign of Christ). Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession—the foundational document of Lutheranism—explicitly condemns "certain Jewish opinions" that the saints will possess a worldly kingdom and suppress the wicked before the resurrection of the dead. For Lutherans, the Scofieldian focus on a future, physical, and territorial kingdom in Jerusalem is a classic example of a "Theology of Glory" (Theologia Gloriae) as opposed to the "Theology of the Cross" (Theologia Crucis). Lutheran theologians in 2026 have emphasized that any theology that seeks a political or territorial

"triumph" on this earth before the final judgment is a distraction from the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord. They argue that Scofield's "Secret Rapture" and the subsequent earthly reign of Christ are "pious fictions" that lead believers to look for God's kingdom in the wrong places—namely, in maps and military movements rather than in the Word and Sacraments.

**The Theology of the Two Kingdoms**

Lutheranism's "Two Kingdoms" doctrine also creates a sharp divide with Christian Zionism. This doctrine maintains that God rules the "Kingdom of the Left" (the state, through law and the sword) and the "Kingdom of the Right" (the Church, through the Gospel). By sacralizing a modern nation-state and assigning it a divine, prophetic status, Scofieldian dispensationalism is seen by Lutherans as a dangerous conflation of these two realms. In the 2026 context, the Lutheran World Federation has argued that when a political entity is given "divine rights" via theological interpretation, it becomes immune to the moral and ethical scrutiny required of all worldly governments. This critique is particularly potent in its rejection of the "sacralization" of geopolitics, asserting that the modern State of Israel must be judged by the same standards of justice and human rights as any other secular nation, rather than being shielded by a 1917 footnote from the Scofield Reference Bible.

**Ecumenical Synthesis and the 2026 Consensus**

The convergence of Reformed and Lutheran critiques in the mid-2020s has provided a robust academic foundation for the broader ecumenical movement. While the Episcopal Church provided the legislative momentum and the Jerusalem Patriarchs provided the pastoral urgency, it was the Reformed and Lutheran scholars who provided the systematic deconstruction of Scofield's "Discontinuity." By re-establishing the "Unity of the Covenant" and the "Theology of the Cross," these traditions have helped move the debate from a simple disagreement over "End Times" charts to a fundamental defense of the Gospel itself. The result is a unified front that views Scofieldian dispensationalism not as a variety of Protestantism, but as a systematic departure from the historic, creedal, and biblical witness of the global church.

## 8. The Sacralization of Geopolitics: Scofieldism as a Tool of Foreign Policy

**The Transformation of Theology into Statecraft**

The most profound impact of the Scofield Reference Bible was not its effect on Sunday school curricula, but its eventual migration into the corridors of secular power. By the mid-twentieth century, what began as a method for "rightly dividing" the word of truth had evolved into a sophisticated framework for interpreting—and directing—international relations. This process, termed the sacralization of geopolitics, occurs when specific territorial disputes, military

alliances, and legislative acts are removed from the realm of human diplomacy and reclassified as divine mandates. In the Scofieldian system, the modern State of Israel is not viewed as a Westphalian nation-state subject to international law, but as a prophetic entity whose borders and security are the direct concern of the Almighty. Consequently, for a significant portion of the American electorate and their representatives, supporting specific hardline policies in the Levant became a matter of religious obedience rather than political pragmatism.

**The Balfour Legacy and the Prophetic Clock**

The roots of this sacralization can be traced back to the early twentieth century, coinciding with the British Mandate and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Scofield's work provided a ready-made theological justification for British and, later, American support for a Jewish homeland. By framing the restoration of a Jewish national entity as the necessary "ticking" of the prophetic clock, Scofieldism allowed Western powers to view their colonial and post-colonial interests through a lens of biblical fulfillment. This created a symbiotic relationship between dispensationalist preachers and geopolitical strategists. The theology provided a moral and eternal "cover" for strategic interests, while the political events provided "proof" that the dispensationalist interpretation of scripture was correct. By 2026, the historic churches have identified this feedback loop as a primary driver of regional instability, arguing that it replaces a "theology of the cross" with a "theology of the sword."

**The 2020s: From Advocacy to Interference**

In the years leading up to 2026, the use of Scofieldian theology as a tool of foreign policy reached a fever pitch. The "Great Divergence" was accelerated by the visible influence of foreign evangelical delegations who traveled to the Holy Land not as pilgrims, but as political lobbyists. These groups, often operating under the banner of Christian Zionism, utilized Scofield's "two-peoples" theory to argue for the absolute sovereignty of one ethnic group over the land, effectively calling for the erasure of the civil and human rights of the indigenous population. The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration specifically highlighted this "interference," noting that foreign religious actors were using their wealth and political access in Washington and Brussels to override the pastoral concerns of the local bishops. This period saw a shift where the "End Times" charts of the 1970s were replaced by real-time digital maps of settlement expansion, all justified by the footnotes of a 1909 study Bible.

**The Erosion of Diplomatic Norms**

The systematic rejection of Scofieldism by the Episcopal Church and the Jerusalem Patriarchs is, in part, a defense of the possibility of diplomacy itself. When a conflict is sacralized, it becomes "zero-sum" and "apocalyptic." If the borders of a modern state are seen as divinely ordained, then any compromise, treaty, or concession is viewed not as a diplomatic tool for peace, but as

an act of apostasy against God’s plan. The 2024 Episcopal resolution D006 pointedly observed that this "rigid interpretation" makes a just peace impossible because it views conflict as a divinely mandated precursor to the Second Coming. By deconstructing the Scofieldian framework, the historic churches are attempting to "de-sacralize" the geography of the Middle East, returning it to a space where international law, human rights, and the "New Commandment" of Christ can once again take precedence over the speculative timelines of nineteenth-century dispensationalism. This movement seeks to strip the "religious mask" from nationalist agendas, insisting that no state or political movement is above the ethical demands of the Gospel.

## 9. The Impact on the Global South and Middle Eastern Christianity

### The Invisibility of the "Living Stones"

For the indigenous Christian communities of the Middle East—those who refer to themselves as the "Living Stones" of the Holy Land—the rise of Scofieldian dispensationalism has been experienced not as a theological debate, but as an existential threat. The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration gave voice to a grievance that has been simmering for over a century: that Western "end-times" theology has effectively rendered the oldest Christian communities in the world invisible. In the Scofieldian framework, the primary actors in the divine drama of the Middle East are the modern nation-state of Israel and the various geopolitical powers of the West. In this binary view, Palestinian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Syrian Christians are often treated as an inconvenient anomaly or, worse, as non-existent. By prioritizing an ethnic and territorial "restoration" of Israel as the singular sign of the approaching apocalypse, dispensationalism has historically provided a religious justification for policies that result in the displacement and marginalization of the very people who have maintained the Christian witness in the Levant since the Day of Pentecost.

### The Charge of Theological Imperialism

In the mid-2020s, this tension reached a breaking point, leading to what many regional leaders call a rejection of "theological imperialism." The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, in their January 2026 statement, were explicit in their condemnation of foreign religious actors who claim to speak for the "Christian interest" in the region while disregarding the local pastoral authority. This critique is shared across the Global South, where churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are increasingly viewing Scofieldian dispensationalism as a Western colonial import. These churches argue that the Scofield framework imposes a nineteenth-century Anglo-American political agenda onto the biblical text, one that prioritizes the "sacralization" of land and militarism over the New Testament’s call for reconciliation and the protection of the

vulnerable. The 2026 consensus marks a moment where the "Mother Church" and her sisters in the Global South have collectively demanded a "de-colonization" of the biblical narrative, reclaiming a hermeneutic that honors the presence and dignity of the local Body of Christ.

**The Rise of Indigenous Hermeneutics**

One of the most significant developments in 2026 is the institutional shift within global evangelical bodies, which were once the stronghold of Scofieldian thought. The election of leaders from the Middle East to high-ranking positions in organizations like the World Evangelical Alliance and the European Baptist Federation signals a change in the theological "center of gravity." These leaders bring with them an indigenous hermeneutic that rejects the "Two-Peoples" theory in favor of a robust ecclesiology of the "One Body." They argue that the Scofieldian focus on the rebuilding of a physical temple or the arrival of "red heifers" is a distraction from the actual suffering and witness of Christians on the ground. By emphasizing the "Theology of the Living Stones," these indigenous voices have successfully moved the global conversation away from apocalyptic speculation and toward the "ordinary requirements of justice" that are central to the Gospel. This shift has forced Western churches to confront the reality that their "prophetic maps" often justify the erasure of their own brothers and sisters in faith.

**Ecumenical Resistance and the Protection of the Flock**

The impact of this theological realignment is visible in the increased ecumenical resistance to land confiscation and settlement expansion. The historic churches in Jerusalem have argued that the "favored" status given to Christian Zionist ideologies at official political levels constitutes a direct "interference in the internal life of the churches." They point out that when foreign Christians fund the displacement of local communities based on a footnote from the Scofield Reference Bible, they are not fulfilling prophecy, but rather "wounding the unity of the faithful." This has led to a more assertive pastoral stance, where the Jerusalem Patriarchs now claim "exclusive representation" of the Christian flock in matters pertaining to communal and religious life. This move is designed to strip legitimacy from foreign "Christian Zionist" groups who have historically bypassed local church leaders to lobby for policies that the local community views as detrimental to a just peace.

**The Global South and the Rejection of the "Parenthesis"**

Beyond the Middle East, the rejection of Scofieldism in the Global South is driven by a refusal to accept the "Parenthesis Church" theory. For churches in the midst of rapid growth and social transformation, the idea that the Church is a "temporary gap" in God’s real history is both insulting and biblically untenable. These communities view themselves not as a celestial waiting room, but as the active, primary vessel of God’s mission in the world. The 2026 Jerusalem

Declaration served as a catalyst for a broader "Covenantal" movement across the Global South, where the unity of the Bible and the centrality of the multi-ethnic Church are being re-asserted against the fragmentation of dispensationalist "ages." This realignment has profound political implications, as churches in the Global South are now less likely to provide a "blank check" of support for Western foreign policy based on dispensationalist assumptions. Instead, they are looking to the Jerusalem Patriarchs and the "Mother Church" for a theology that prioritizes the "Living Stones" over the "Stone Altars" of an imagined future.

**10. The Great Divergence: The Institutional Labeling of "False Teaching"**

**From Theological Disagreement to Ecumenical Condemnation**

The year 2026 will likely be remembered in ecclesiastical history as the moment when the "Great Divergence" reached its formal conclusion. For over a century, the tension between historic Christian orthodoxy and Scofieldian dispensationalism was treated as a secondary matter—a difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of difficult prophetic texts that did not necessarily breach the boundaries of fellowship. However, the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration represents a fundamental shift in this dynamic. By officially labeling Christian Zionism and its underlying Scofieldian framework as "false teaching" and a "damaging ideology," the highest authorities of the global church have moved the conversation from the realm of biblical "adiaphora"—matters of indifference—into the realm of "status confessionis." This is a theological term indicating a situation where the very nature of the Gospel is perceived to be at stake, requiring a clear and unambiguous "No" from the institutional church.

**The Weight of the "False Teaching" Label**

The use of the term "false teaching" in an ecumenical document signed by Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican leaders carries a specific and heavy weight. In the context of the 2026 declaration, it signals that dispensationalism is no longer viewed as a "variety" of the Christian faith, but as a "heterodox" system that falls outside the bounds of the historic creeds. The primary justification for this label is the "Two-Peoples" theory, which the signatories argue creates a fundamental rupture in the doctrine of the Church and the person of Christ. By suggesting that God has a separate, earthly plan for a specific national group that operates independently of the New Covenant in Christ, Scofieldism is seen as denying the sufficiency and universality of the Cross. This institutional labeling serves as a "theological firebreak," warning the faithful that the path of Christian Zionism leads away from the apostolic witness and toward a politicized religion that compromises the Church's primary mission.

**The Erosion of the Evangelical Consensus**

The Great Divergence has also caused a significant fracture within the Evangelical world itself. Throughout the twentieth century, many Evangelical bodies maintained a "big tent" approach that included both dispensationalists and covenantalists. However, the 2024 Episcopal Resolution D006 and the subsequent 2026 Jerusalem Declaration forced a moment of choosing. We are now seeing the emergence of a "post-Scofield" Evangelicalism that is actively seeking to distance itself from the political and theological baggage of Christian Zionism. This group, often led by scholars from the Global South, has joined the historic churches in calling for a "Reformation of Eschatology." They argue that the "Scofield Monopoly" on the American religious imagination has been broken by the reality of the suffering church in the Middle East. As institutional bodies continue to issue formal rejections of dispensationalist themes, the "Great Divergence" is creating a new ecumenical map where the primary divide is no longer between Catholic and Protestant, but between those who hold to a "Covenant of Unity" and those who cling to a "Dispensationalism of Division."

**The Wall of Resistance and the Future of Fellowship**

The consequences of this institutional labeling are most visible in the "wall of resistance" now standing between the historic churches and the remaining strongholds of dispensationalist thought. In 2026, many ecumenical organizations have implemented "theological litmus tests" regarding Christian Zionism as a prerequisite for full membership or partnership in Middle Eastern missions. This is not merely an act of exclusion, but an act of protection for the "Living Stones" of the Holy Land. By labeling these theories as false, the church leaders are stripping away the "religious immunity" that has often shielded Christian Zionist groups from criticism. This shift ensures that the "Mother Church" in Jerusalem is no longer used as a background prop for Western apocalyptic theories but is recognized as the authoritative voice on the meaning of the Gospel in its own land. The Great Divergence, therefore, is not just a parting of ways; it is a reclamation of the boundaries of the Christian faith in an age of geopolitical upheaval.

**11. Future Implications: The Decline of Dispensationalism in the 21st Century**

The systematic rejection of Scofieldian thought in 2024 and 2026 is not an isolated ecclesiastical event but the culmination of a long-term sociological and theological decay. As we look toward the middle of the twenty-first century, the "Great Divergence" signals a permanent shift in the landscape of global Christianity. The most immediate future implication is the "hollowing out" of the dispensationalist middle. For decades, many evangelical denominations maintained a soft or "pop" dispensationalism that informed their hymns, prayers, and political leanings without

requiring a rigorous commitment to Scofield's seven eras. However, the formal declarations of 2026 have made this middle ground untenable. Churches are now being forced to choose between a historic, creedal continuity and a fragmented, apocalyptic literalism. This pressure is accelerating a migration of believers out of dispensationalist-leaning bodies and into the very traditions that have led the charge against Scofieldism.

**The Demographic Pivot and the Liturgical Return**

A primary driver of this decline is the generational shift occurring within Western evangelicalism. Younger believers, particularly those coming of age in the 2020s, have shown a marked exhaustion with the "Rapture Culture" that defined their parents' generation. The speculative maps of the 1970s and 1980s, which attempted to link Soviet movements or computer barcodes to the Book of Revelation, have largely failed to resonate with a generation facing climate change, global inequality, and a desire for more rooted forms of faith. This has led to what sociologists call the "Canterbury Trail" or the "Rome/Constantinople Pivot," where younger Christians are abandoning the theological innovations of the nineteenth century in favor of the sacramental and liturgical depth of the Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions. Because these historic traditions are the most vocal critics of Christian Zionism, this demographic shift is effectively starving dispensationalism of its future leadership and lay participation.

**The Collapse of Institutional Strongholds**

The institutional footprint of Scofieldian thought is also in a state of rapid contraction. By 2026, many of the Bible colleges and seminaries that were founded specifically to promote dispensationalism have either closed, merged with broader universities, or significantly revised their doctrinal statements. The move by major denominations to remove "premillennialism" from their statements of faith—as seen in several prominent evangelical associations earlier this decade—indicates a desire to decouple the core of the Christian message from a specific end-times chart. This institutional "de-Scofieldization" means that future pastors will be trained in a theological environment where the "Two-Peoples" theory is treated as a historical curiosity rather than a biblical mandate. As the scholarly defense of dispensationalism retreats from the academy, the movement is being relegated to the fringes of the internet and independent "prophecy ministries," losing its status as a respectable framework for global Christian witness.

**Foreign Policy and the Dissolution of the Theological Firewall**

Perhaps the most significant secular implication of this decline is the dissolution of the "theological firewall" that has historically protected certain Western foreign policy stances in the Middle East. For a century, the Scofield Reference Bible provided a sense of "prophetic necessity" that shielded political alliances from ethical or pragmatic scrutiny. As this framework

loses its grip on the Christian imagination, American and European politicians can no longer rely on a unified, dispensationalist voting bloc. Younger evangelicals, in particular, are increasingly demanding that their faith be applied to the "ordinary requirements of justice" rather than the fulfillment of speculative prophecy. This means that support for the State of Israel, or any other regional actor, will increasingly be debated on the basis of human rights, international law, and regional stability rather than on the basis of a 1917 footnote. The "sacralization of geopolitics" is giving way to a more traditional "Theology of the Cross," where the protection of all human life and the witness of the local "Living Stones" take precedence over territorial expansion.

**Toward an Ecumenical Re-unification**

Finally, the decline of Scofieldism is paving the way for a new era of ecumenical cooperation. For over a hundred years, the divide between dispensationalists and the historic churches served as a barrier to unified action in the Middle East and beyond. With the removal of this "theological wall," we are seeing an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the various Orthodox Patriarchates. This unified front, solidified by the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration, allows the church to speak with a single voice on matters of peace, justice, and the common good. While the Scofield era left a deep imprint on the twentieth century, its twilight in the twenty-first century marks a return to a more ancient, unified, and Christ-centered ecclesiology. The future of the global church appears to be moving toward a "Covenantal Consensus" that views the entire human family as the theater of God’s grace, rather than a divided stage for an ethnic and apocalyptic drama.

## 12. Conclusion and Synthesis: Toward a Unified Ecclesiology

**The Finality of the Great Divergence**

The theological and institutional journey from the 1909 publication of the Scofield Reference Bible to the 2026 Jerusalem Declaration represents one of the most significant arcs in modern church history. What began as a niche interpretive framework for understanding biblical prophecy evolved into a global geopolitical force, only to be systematically dismantled by the very institutions it sought to bypass. The "Great Divergence" is not merely a record of academic disagreement; it is a formal boundary-setting event. By 2026, the global church—led by the Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Patriarchs of the Holy Land—has collectively asserted that the "Two-Peoples" theory of C.I. Scofield is a fundamental departure from the apostolic faith. This conclusion marks the end of an era of theological ambiguity, where dispensationalist novelties were often tolerated as harmless eccentricities. Today, they are recognized as a "false teaching" that compromises the unity of the Body of Christ and the integrity of the Gospel of peace.

**Synthesis of the Ecumenical Resistance**

The systematic rejection detailed in this paper reveals a remarkable consensus across disparate traditions. Despite their historical differences, the Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic, and Anglican bodies have found common ground in their defense of Covenantal Continuity. This synthesis is built on three pillars. First, the Christological Pillar: the conviction that all biblical promises are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, leaving no room for a separate, ethnic "plan B." Second, the Ecclesiological Pillar: the recognition of the Church as the "One New Humanity," where the division between "Earthly Israel" and "Heavenly Church" is viewed as a violation of the New Covenant. Third, the Ethical Pillar: the insistence that theology must not be used to "sacralize" territorial conflict or marginalize the "Living Stones" of the indigenous Christian community. This unified front has effectively created a "Covenantal Consensus" that restores the Church—not the nation-state—to its central role in the divine narrative.

**The Reclamation of the Mother Church**

The 2026 Jerusalem Declaration stands as the definitive "pastoral firebreak" of this movement. It represents a moment where the "Mother Church" in Jerusalem reclaimed its voice from Western intermediaries. For over a century, the Scofieldian framework allowed Western Christians to speak *for* the Holy Land while ignoring the Christians *in* the Holy Land. By labeling Christian Zionism a "damaging ideology," the Jerusalem Patriarchs have asserted their apostolic authority to define the meaning of the Land and the Flock. This reclamation has forced the global church to confront the reality that its eschatological maps have real-world consequences. The "Great Divergence" is, at its heart, a victory for the indigenous Christian witness, ensuring that the presence of the Church in the Levant is no longer treated as a theological "parenthesis" but as the primary evidence of God’s ongoing work in the world.

**Toward a Post-Scofield Future**

As we move deeper into the twenty-first century, the influence of Scofieldian dispensationalism continues to wane. The "hollowing out" of the movement, driven by generational shifts and the institutional "de-Scofieldization" of seminaries, suggests that the "Great Divergence" has created a permanent new reality. The future of global Christianity is increasingly defined by a return to the historic creeds and a "Theology of the Cross" that rejects the "Theology of Glory" found in apocalyptic nationalism. While the remnants of Scofieldism may persist in the digital fringes, they no longer command the institutional or moral authority they once held. The result is a more unified, ecumenical, and Christ-centered ecclesiology—one that views the whole world as the theater of God’s grace and the multi-ethnic Church as the singular, eternal people of God. The twilight of the Scofield era is, ultimately, the dawn of a reclaimed unity, where the

"Yes" and "Amen" are found in Christ alone, rather than in the shifting borders of earthly kingdoms.

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The author has published over 5,000 AI-assisted papers at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Douglas-Youvan/research . Google Scholar has indexed these preprints, and if you want a particular reference, the AI mode of a Google search (Gemini) has efficiently catalogued these preprints.

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CHRISTIAN ZIONISM | SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE | DISPENSATIONALISM | COVENANT THEOLOGY | ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY | MIDDLE EAST CHRISTIANS | GEOPOLITICS AND RELIGION
INNOCENCE
CONSCIENCE
GOVT.
PROMISE
LAW
GRACE
KINGDOM
1909-2026
SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE
TWO-PEOPLES THEORY: ISRAEL & CHURCH
THIRD TEMPLE
TERRITORIAL FULFILLMENT
FALSE HOPE
1909-2026
SCOFIELDIAN DISPENSATIONALISM
THE GREAT DIVERGENCE
Unified Wall
CATHOLIC
ORTHODOX
CATHOLIC
THE 2026 JERUSALEM DECLARATION
JOINT ECUMENICAL STATEMENT
CHRISTIAN ZIONISM: FALSE TEACHING.
COVENANT OF UNITY.
ONE PEOPLE OF GOD.
SEEK JUSTICE & PEACE.
CATHOLIC
ANGLICAN
REFOLMAN
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